

8/29/06
Lewis Smith

S/Sgt. Jack Ryder Tail-Gunner on Capt. Eugene Link's crew, his story about the raid to Yap Island on July 15, 1944

Our 50th mission was a dangerous daylight raid over Yap Island with no fighter escort. The weather was stormy, and the formation had to breakup temporarily. The Japanese were flying their newest aircraft the "Tojo". Ryder explained that because of normal prop wash the B-24's do not fly close or wing-tip-to-wing tip. From the ground it would look like this but actually the formation was set up in step-like fashion-each plane flying a little above the other.

I spotted a Japanese plane turning toward us and I hollered, " Pilot from Tail--Up!" The pilot pulled up and the airplane rose sharply in an evasive maneuver to avoid striking two Liberators flying on a collision course below us. I could see one B-24 steering to the right and another one was on my right, which had been shot full of holes along the fuselage. The pilot was apparently dead or unconscious and the plane veered and tipped over and slammed into the one on the left. We were about 20 to 25,000 feet and if we had not pulled up quickly we would have gone down tangled with the two planes as they circled down, leveled off and hit the water about 20 feet apart. Two smoke piles. We had forty planes in our attack on Yap Island which was out of range for our P-40 escort. Arriving at Yap we dropped incendiary bomb's to mark the area. The incendiaries would hit the water and blink and some hit land causing fires, which lit up the area for our bombers. At this time, we were flying silvery aluminum planes, which were easy to spot. Our plane was the lead plane. The bombs were released, and we returned to base.

This is Ryder's account of the raid as told to the Author of a local book recently published . I was the nose gunner on the crew, and the only thing that I can remember is seeing the two planes going down after they collided

Most of the missions that we went on, the Japanese Fighter planes that were waiting to attack us, usually made only two or three passes at us. By the time we were headed away from the target, we were beyond their range, and they were no longer able to stay with us and attack us On this mission they were using a different plane that had more armament to protect them and also had a longer range, so they were able stay with us longer, resulting in more attacks than in the previous missions.

This was our 50th and last mission that we flew. It was a twelve hour mission.

Captain Link was the original Pilot of our crew. He had completed his flying sometime before this mission and our Co-Pilot Lt. Lionel Laliberte took over as our Pilot and we had a new Co-Pilot, his name I cannot remember, so to the best of my memory Lt. Laliberte was our Pilot on this mission.

By Lewis Smith